Interview with Charles Stuart Kennedy

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project
Foreign Service Spouse Series

CHARLES STUART KENNEDY

Interviewed by: Jewell Fenzi

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Q: This is Jewell Fenzi. I am interviewing Charles Stuart Kennedy, Stu Kennedy. We are in his office at George Washington University. Kennedy served in Frankfurt, Dhahran, Belgrade, Saigon, Athens, Seoul and Naples, with stints in between, in INR, the Senior Seminar and the Board of Examiners.

KENNEDY: We are discussing an indexing project in which we sent out 3,000 questionnaires to retired FSOs to list where they served, as well as addresses. The purpose of the whole project was to allow researchers to contact those who served in a particular place at a particular time.

Q: But just compiling and indexing all this information, you havdone a great service.

KENNEDY: Yes.

Q: It's fantastic.

KENNEDY: As you look at it more and more, it really is unique, because there have been other programs which have decided, “Gee, we are interested in Iran or Vietnam,” but

nowhere has anybody put together something in a profession. In other words, if you want to come to talk to someone in a profession... I'm using profession in its broadest terms, rather than just say, “If you were dubbed an FSO, you are a professional,” because we do include political ambassadors. I find myself, having served under David Bruce and Ellsworth Bunker, not to draw the line very sharply between a professional FSO and somebody appointed from outside.

Q: Where did you serve with David Bruce?

KENNEDY: Serving with Bruce is a misnomer. I met him once. I was a lowly vice consul in our huge visa, and other types of consular work in Frankfurt. He came through once. I remember my consul general, who was John Burns, making a remark about my just growing a mustache. In those days, growing a mustache, I was not trying to look more youthful, but trying to look older. He made some sort of disparaging remark about my mustache to Ambassador Bruce. I went ahead and grew it anyway.

Q: The reason I ask is because I met his secretary. She was at my table at a luncheon at the Democratic Club. She is one of the people I'm going to ask for an interview. Whether she will talk to us or not, I don't know.

KENNEDY: I have the highest respect for some of these men. This is the sad thing. We don't seem to be getting the same type of people. We are getting, sort of a little bit of “noblest oblige,” there. People seem to be coming in from the outside either to get their social title or to prove a theory, or to support the president, rather than feel they want to serve the country. This is the second generation with a great deal of money. The first generation in the diplomatic service with a great deal of money made had a sense of service to the country. Those today are working on their own egos or have their own agenda.

Q: Some ladies I'm talking to now, Mrs. Elbrick, for instance. These ladies represent that first generation who entered the Foreign Service with affluence. I really think they went

with a sense of dedication. They didn't go to make their name, because they had their name. They certainly didn't go for wealth, because it wasn't there in those days. They told some of those people who went in the 1930s that if you can get yourself to Warsaw, there is a job there for you. We are never going to duplicate that attitude.

KENNEDY: Well, it's hard.

Q: I want to call it a mindset. What do you want to call it?

KENNEDY: I grew up with that a bit. Although I came from no money, I went through a New England prep school and a New England college. You went out and did things. You went into the military, without any great pleasure, but you did it because there was a war on. If you went into government service, you didn't try to maneuver too much about where you went. You wanted to have some control over your destiny, but you didn't get into this thing in order to make money or to gain social distinction.

Q: Springboard to something else.

KENNEDY: Springboard to something else, or to think you had an inside track on being an ambassador, or something like that. I don't want to overplay this, but there was a different mindset I think than there is today. I think the service reflects it, too, which is unfortunate. I think the system in the service, too, is less rewarding today.

Q: And yet at our last post, we saw five super young men. I will be interested to see how long they stay. One of them was 23, pink-cheeked, out of a prep school in the south. He was the nicest young man you could ever ask for, and bright. He is going off to Russia. Another one was 12 years older, and is going back to Japan. He had been there in the Peace Corps. There was another one who was a Turkish specialist. They were really nice, bright, young people. They were very dedicated to their job at the time. One of them was a little impatient with his consular job. I must say that he didn't hesitate to speak up. He may run into trouble before he is through, too, but that young man would be in the office

on Saturdays and Sundays reading. He was interested in the political situation. He would be in there Saturday and Sunday anything that was pertinent on the political situation in Trinidad. He was doing his consular duties because that was an assignment, and he had to do it, but he was also following his interests. He was outspoken, but very bright. It will be interesting to see how long he lasts, and how he fares.

KENNEDY: My experience, I must say, running a consular section, if I were to take bright, young men and women and on their first assignment... Looking back on it, I rather enjoyed that the young people were coming out during the 1960s, rather than later because they were full of ideas and they really challenged you. I really got a double barrel, having been in Vietnam with these people, most of them who were opposed to the war, and then going to Greece, where we had this bloody dictatorship, which they were also opposed to. As a senior officer, I was trying to explain our policy, which I didn't always agree with, but at least, teach them how to be professionals. It was challenging, but fun.

Q: This is interesting because I had starred both Greece and Saigon to ask you about, because you were there at very exciting times. The other thing was, did you support government policy when you disagreed with it, or how did you support it when you disagreed with it? Are we bringing too many best and brightest into the service with expectations that can never be filled, simply because the numbers are right there? You recruit everybody as a potential ambassador, and a handful are going to make it. What kind of situation are you creating? Can an officer, such as you, in a situation like that, ease these people into the system with some sort of true expectations?

KENNEDY: Yes, you can. One thing I have enjoyed about it is working with young officers. It keeps me alert. I enjoy the dialogue. I think this is the important thing, rather than saying, “This is your job, now do it. Don't bother me,” which I think is the temptation. In particular, with consular officers, because many supervisors in the consular business are people who really are there because they haven't been able to get on in the political field, or the economic field. I am obviously out of the business now, but at the time, I represented

something of, you might say, “the new breed.” These are people who came in, having taken the examination... I took the three and one-half day exam. We came from the right education and all, with all reasonableexpectations to be able to move up, if not to be ambassador, to move up to the upper ranks in the service.

But, although, we were told, “Stay away from consular business,” we liked it. It was fun. I must say that I really enjoyed my time dealing with consular affairs. But, to get to my point, I saw the potential for, at least service, in consular work. After all, you are deciding the fates of people, rather than writing pieces of paper. I would try to get this out to the young lads and lassies who had come in. I tried to get across that I was interested in what they did, and often acted as a psychiatrist for many of these young people who were coming from the academic ranks. It was a little bit like the loss of virginity. It was the first time they had really ever been lied to by people, who wanted visas, and were lying about their background. Some officers would get into a terrible funk because they just weren't used to this. It was a great insult. I had much trouble, but made a point of letting them understand the history of the country they were in, that to many of these people, this is how they got by. Obviously, the goal was to find out if they were lying and maybe refuse them the visa, but not to get indignant about it because these people were going after a worthy goal, they wanted to come into the United States. I found that rather than just telling them to do it, I would explain why, and then obviously enforce it. If somebody didn't follow the instructions to a point, you would sit on them rather heavily, but try to bring them around to the professional point of view. I also spent a lot of time talking to them about careers, what they might expect and all. I found the fact that I had served in personnel very helpful. One could be fairly objective about where one was going, how to plot one's career, to make the best possible use of one's talent and all. But, also to take a good hard look at something like consular work and feel that there is something intrinsically valuable in doing that. After all, helping Americans who are in trouble, or selecting people who are going to be Americans, is not in itself a bad thing. I enjoyed doing this type of work.

Q: My husband was in the economic cone, but what he enjoyed abouconsular work was exactly what you said and how helping people...

KENNEDY: It's not hard to appeal to altruism. People would go through the section, and then you would go on to other things. But, you try to, both keep in touch, and to make sure that when they were in the section, let them have little pieces of goodies. By this, I mean, real problems. This would either be managerial type problems or helping people or interesting assignments, going off to prisons, or something like this, but try to distribute it around, to make it as fun as possible. When they left consular work, they would have an interesting memory of this type of work.

Q: In both Greece and Saigon, at the particular time you were there, you must have had a lot of people who were really quite desperate to get out and go to the United States

KENNEDY: It sounds great. You see those pictures of the mobs in the front of the consular's part of our embassy, the last days before Saigon. Well, when I was there, from 1969 to 1970, frankly, in hindsight, it sounds silly, but it was actually true, we were winning the war very nicely. The Tet Offensive had been over for a year before I arrived, although it had a profound effect of the United States, in Vietnam, it was a tremendous defeat. The Viet Cong was basically knocked out of the war, and never came back. The North Vietnamese have not put much of their army into South Vietnam. We were beginning to withdraw our troops. The Vietnamese are very much like the French. They really love their families. They love their home and they don't want to leave. In fact, we would be issuing visas, to many of them were married to GIs. One of our major problems was getting the wives who would go to the United States... I remember vividly one case where a woman went to Great Falls, Montana in the middle of the winter. She said, “I think I want to go home for Tet,” which was around the first of the year. She came buzzing back and nothing would budge her. She kept saying, “Oh, the embassy won't give me a reason,” which was a bunch of nonsense. But, Mike Mansfield was writing us, saying, “Why are you keeping this woman here?” We were writing back, saying, “She just doesn't want to come back.”

She is back with her family. This is true. Yes, this was a normal program, but we weren't overly pressed. One of our major problems there was with orphans. Many orphans were being adopted.

Q: These were American, Vietnamese orphans.

KENNEDY: Well, it could be any kind. There were many orphans. There was a war, so that they might be mixed and they might not be mixed. But, the problem was that Vietnam had a French style bureaucracy, which was basically European rule, that for a good adoption, the child has to be of the same religion, the same blood, all that. I think the Europeans may have gotten out of this, but they would practically be saying that you had to have the same type of chromosome as the adoptive parents. It was very legalistic. Any exception there had to be resolved by the president. President Thieu was having to decide on orphans in the middle of a war. Naturally, we would work to get the applicants through, but these things would get caught in the bureaucracy, and we had the parents screaming at us. I didn't blame them. Frankly, some children were dying. What was happening there, sometimes, the parents would be told that they were going to adopt this baby and be given a name, and all that. The baby would die and another baby would be put in its place. Essentially, who was going to say anything? Why make everybody feel bad? We just sort of went along with it because it was for the good of the children. It's surprising that our visa business was not as pressed.

Turning to Greece, yes we had immigration, but again, it was pretty standard stuff. Those people who were in opposition and wanted to get out, many of them had money, and got out anyway. They often had green cards. They would be eligible for visitor visas and all. The ones who caused a little more trouble than that, were the seaman. Many Greek seamen would go on ships the first time, and then jump ship. They would get jobs such as painting the Statue of Liberty, all the illegal aliens. Many Greek restaurants in the United States were staffed with illegal immigrants, mostly Greek. Then, sometimes they would try to marry an American girl. There were a lot of adjustment problems with them. So, the

immigration program didn't show the desertion from Greece of people who were unhappy with the dictatorship. Where we had a real problem was the Greek Americans, or just plain Americans who came over to demonstrate against the Colonel's regime.

We had one case I remember where there were two Americans. One was a Greek American and the other was a plain American. He was a theological student. A man named Alexander Panagoulis, I think was his name, tried to assassinate the prime minister of Greece, Colonel Papadopoulos by setting a bomb off. It didn't work. He was arrested and was kept in jail. There was an attempt to free him with the widow of Lord Fleming, the man who was one of the co-discoverers of penicillin. His widow, his second wife, I think, was Lady Fleming, who was Greek. She came back and she put together a plot to free Panagoulis. It didn't work. But, they were all caught. This theological student, who I think was from a Presbyterian or Lutheran seminary, had gone over to study Orthodoxy, had been enlisted in this hairbrain scheme to be the wheel man, the driver of the car. I think he was overwrought by the fact that Lady Fleming was there.

There was another woman, who was a Greek American, who had come over. She was involved in it much more deeply than the young man. They were all arrested. I went to the court martial and heard the testimony. Lady Fleming got out of it. They expelled her, because the British made a big protest, but leaving some smaller fish to be trapped. The military police were running it. I had a hard time getting in to see these people. The military headquarters of the military police was just a block away from the embassy. That is where they did a lot of the nasty stuff. I was finally able to get over and to see the Greek American woman and the theological student. He wasn't much bother. She had been, if not beaten up, given a very difficult time. The military police weren't very nice. So, our idea was to mainly get to see them and to at least keep tabs on them so that the police were aware that there would be repercussions and protests and all that. I think the upshot was that the theological student was given a suspended sentence and kicked out. The Greek American woman was kept in jail, I think, for about six months, and then suspended. We had some others who would come over. It always seemed that it was on

the weekend when I would get a call from the police. Sometimes it would be treated in a light way. There was a vote, yes or no, on a new Constitution. Of course, everybody was supposed to vote “yes” on the Constitution. An American was over there with a billboard in Constitution Square with a sign in Greek, saying, “Vote oxi,” which means “no.” It was on Labor Day or something like that, and I had to go down and tell the police I would get them on the next plane, and send them out.

There was another American girl who somehow got involved with a Greek activist who was plotting the overthrow of the Greek government, but in a very amateurish way. Remember that this was during the 1960s, or the early 1970s. There were a lot of students from the United States. She came in with something called the Guerilla's Cookbook, or something like that. It was put out by the same people who did the Whole Earth Catalogue or something of that nature. But, the cookbook told you how to make Molotov cocktails and all this stuff. It sold like hotcakes at Berkeley and other places like that. It was a how to do it thing, but she came in with this damn thing and the police got her. They arrested her boyfriend. He was a deserter from the military anyway. There she was...

Q: Their military or our military?

KENNEDY: Their military. So, I got called in. My wife was overjoyed when suddenly I arrived with this guerilla girl. The police said, “Okay, instead of putting her in jail, which you would rather not, if you will take her and see that she gets on the plane tomorrow.” I thought, “Okay.” I arrived home with this young lady, complete with lice in her hair, from the little time in the jail. It's an interesting life for a wife of a Foreign Service officer, particularly a consular officer. This was the type of thing we would get very much involved in.

Greece was sort of at a meeting point between the Near East and Europe. It was the time of American, you might say, more affluence than perhaps there is now. We had an awful lot of young people who were taking either the summer or often a year or so off to

find themselves. They would drift all over Europe with their knack sacks and America's express checks and guitars. Those that didn't have support from home would get it from their friends, who were getting support from home. Many of them would congregate in Athens, particularly on the islands, Crete, Corfu, and other islands. The colonels did not take a very tolerant view of dealing in drugs. Drugs in those days was hashish, which is a stronger form of marijuana that is grown in Turkey and other parts of the Near East. If they were caught, even with a small amount, they would usually end up in jail for a year or so. We always had 10 to 20 in jail. Now, I understand they bring them all and put them in jail in Athens. But, in those days, they were jailed pretty much where they were caught, which was usually on the islands. In a way, it was sort of fun to get out of the office. But it also got to be a pain in the neck, because it is not always easy, particularly during the winter, to get to those islands. But, we made a point of going to every trial and sitting through these trials and showing the American embassy's interest and support. Usually, what would happen is they would get a year or two. After maybe eight or ten months, they would be released. There were several interesting cases. One was an airplane, two passenger-type plane, which was tracked from Lebanon, where they caught it loading hashish. It took right off. There was a search all over the Mediterranean for it. They landed for gas on Crete, where the plane was seized. There was a crew of five and all of them claimed at the trial that none of them noticed that in the back something like 1,000 kilos of hashish had been loaded on board the plane. Somehow, they all happened to be looking the other way. There was a long criminal trial. The way the Greeks would do the trial was that it would start in the afternoon, and continue until it was over. I think we got out of there at 3:00 in the morning. Everyone was exhausted from this. It was difficult for us because as an embassy representative, we were supposed to be doing what we could to interdict the supply of drugs. At the same time, as a consular officer, I had the responsibility for protecting Americans when they got into trouble. As a matter of fact, I caused a bit of a stir, just because I was the consular officer. The ambassador said, “Well, Stu, why don't you also be the drug representative?” The idea was to stop the flow of drugs. I told him that I couldn't do this because this was wearing two hats. I couldn't very well go out to the

Greeks and say, “Look, you have to be tougher on drugs.” At the same time, run around and say, “Please help these poor Americans who are caught up.” I avoided it. It was given to, I believe, somebody in the economic section. In many places, the consular officer wore both hats, which I think was a very bad mistake.

This particular crew in the airport ended up in jail but they didn't spend very long in jail. As a matter of fact, they spent a pretty short time. I think they were there for about four or five months before they got out. I can't prove it, but there was obviously a payoff somewhere.

Q: Maybe you would rather not know.

KENNEDY: Probably not, no. As a matter of fact, this would happen to me sometimes. A father or mother would come and say, “My son is in jail. I'm sorry for what he has done but I want to get him out. I understand you can pay off people here.” I would say, “You have to understand my position. I can tell you very honestly that I don't know whether it will work or not.” In other words, I was telling them that I won't say that it positively won't work. At the same time, it's conceivable it might be counterproductive. I told them I couldn't tell whether it would work or not. I would say, “Just don't tell me what you are doing,” which I found much better than trying to figure out how it worked out.

The Greek colonels came in to clean up the stables and all that. It probably was better for us than it had been before. I was very disillusioned with a dictatorship, having watched the Greek colonels in practice. It really is rather an inefficient way to try things. It sounds great, because here are people and they only want to strengthen their country, leaving aside their strict moral code, which isn't my moral code. With some of the other things, you think it might be somewhat effective, but it isn't effective. It really doesn't work because somebody gets an idea, they do it, but they don't understand all the ramifications. They do it anyway, but by the time they have done it, they discovered it doesn't work. To give you an idea, they found that there was a port tax levied on foreign ships that came in. Well, Greece has a lot of harbors and a lot of people with money. Boats come in and put in, and

cruise around the islands and all. Apparently, this tax had been promulgated in the 1920s or something like this. Nobody bothered collecting it. So, they decided to collect all the back taxes. There were screams and yells and everybody headed for the Turkish ports. Eventually, they came up with collecting a modest tax, but no back taxes. But, it was that type of thing. In other words, they didn't do it in a rational manner. It scared the hell out of everybody by making some stupid move.

Q: Was Henry Tasca your ambassador then?

KENNEDY: Yes, he was the ambassador the whole time I was there.

Q: Because he was our ambassador in Morocco. My husband always thought he was a very creative man, a very agile thinker. But, he didn't exactly call things right on the colonels, or what happened exactly?

KENNEDY: I can't tell you. I was not privy to all the things that were going on. I was on the country team with him for four years. In the first place, they put him in to represent a new positive policy from President Nixon toward the colonels. It was not embraced completely by any means, but we go through this backwards and forwards. We are going through this with South Africa today: (1) Do you cut off ties and sit in the corner and suck your thumb and say I'm not going to talk to you or, (2) Do you try to moderate the system? He was sent there to try to bring the colonels around to a more democratic form of government. We weren't unhappy as our policy went with an authoritarian government in a NATO country, as opposed to one which we were afraid might be open too much to the left. The left has always been rather strong in Greece. Rightly, or wrongly, probably wrongly, but I'm not exactly sure what we could have done, he tried to deal with the colonels in a positive way. In other words, to nudge them toward more democratic government. It didn't work very well. These things usually don't. It's hard sitting on the sidelines saying, “Why don't you do this and why don't you do that. This would make good sense.” The colonels have their own agenda. Suggestions of the United States aren't very high up on their list

of priorities. There were other things that perhaps one could do. That is the equivalent of sanctions. Nobody else was really doing much. We were under the sheets in bed with them whereas the Brits and the French were in the bed with them, but lying on top of the blankets and partially they were opposed to the regime but did business with it. There was a deliberate attempt by the United States to influence events in Greece.

Q: Did Tasca go along with that approach or was he just, theragain, carrying out policy?

KENNEDY: He was there carrying out policy. I think he was probably of a fairly conservative nature, but he didn't like what was going on there. I know that at country meetings, we would tell him what we were seeing. For example, because of my position, I would see people who were in opposition to the government. I wasn't deliberately going out to do this, but people were getting into trouble, so I was bringing back reports to the jail. People were being beaten up and all this. With the CIA and the military, my feeling was that their influence wasn't very good with the ambassador because they tended to see this government as a positive thing because they were getting what they at least felt was a good plug into the Greek intelligence apparatus, which is always a pleasant thing to have. I think we have some of the same problems with the Israeli intelligence. When you develop this relationship, it's fine, but this means you are tied a little too closely for the government. In some cases, particularly in the Greek case, this was bad. So, the CIA tended to “poo poo” the bad side of the frugal treatment of the military police. Our military had somewhat the same impression. Things were going fine for them. The military was basically happy. They were promoting the officers because they were strong anticommunist and all that. Our political people were trying to meet other people. It wasn't as though we were living in isolation. The Greeks are very talkative. We were talking to people in the opposition and keeping as much tabs on them as one can. It wasn't very difficult. I give Tasca full credit for working hard in a very difficult situation. Another ambassador might have been protesting back and forth, I think with little resolution, except to make him feel good about himself. But, he was calling things as they were. I will give Henry Tasca full credit for supporting me at a difficult time, my only brush with the press.There had been some

bombings around, anti-Colonel bombings. They caught a couple people who had set off a bomb in some cars. One of them was a Greek doctor who had a been a pediatrician in Harvard, or at least taught there. People came from Harvard to see if they could help him. They came to see me. I wasn't the best person to be seen at the time. I didn't come across very well. The problem was that one of the bombs had gone off in my car, just as my wife was getting into it. It was a small kind device. My wife and another officer and his wife went to see the Com#die-Fran#aise in Piraeus. I decided to stay home and read. When they came out, just as my wife got into the car and put the key in, the bomb went off. It was a small bomb put on the tire, in the rear tire wall. It wasn't inconsequential, but it didn't do much damage. Nevertheless, it ruptured the tire well, and blew parts into the trunk. It actually took a nick out of the leg of Jenny Kautsky, another consul's wife. Anyway, the police came. Actually, Ellen drove the car home, but they had put this bomb into an American embassy car as a protest. The thing I found rather despicable about the Greeks was that they were all blaming other people. But, if they wanted to bomb somebody, they would bomb foreigners, rather than their own. If you want to do it, bomb your own bloody military. But, they wouldn't do that. We were targets. These people from Boston came to hear about this poor pediatrician who was unjustly put in jail. I did mention the fact that, after all, I'm not as sympathetic as you might think. He had bombed my car. If it had been bigger, my wife could have been seriously injured. But, that didn't penetrate these people, because they had a different agenda. Anyway, I made a remark about Balkan justice is not exactly the same as Anglo-Saxon justice. I was saying Balkan justice, because I had served five years in Yugoslavia. That got into the Christian Science Monitor, page 23, “High Embassy Official Calls Greek System Corrupt,” or something. It mentioned that term “Balkan justice.” The Greek corruption thing didn't bother them a bit, but the Balkan justice thing was in the Greek paper. There was an editorial that said, “We are not Balkan.” I told Tasca what happened. He wasn't too happy, and wished I had kept my mouth shut, but he gave me good solid support. I think more highly of Henry Tasca than many people do. He was sort of a conservative and a hard charger, but he had a difficult job. He also had

a very difficult wife, too. He went through more than 100 servants, some of them several times, during the four years they were there.

Q: Did she spend much time in Greece? She was really often absenin Morocco.

KENNEDY: She was back in Italy most of the time. When she was there, there was always servant trouble, having the house redecorated and all that. She wasn't very popular, but she wasn't as awful as some of the well-known stories of the Foreign Service ambassadors wives. She really didn't mess around too much with the wives. She would stay out of their affairs and was a phenomenon. You could watch from the sidelines, without tanking. She was pleasant to me. She would have preferred to be doing something else.

Q: That was so long ago that I was layered. As you say, I could watch her objectively because it was the heads of the sections who were having to cope with her. I have always wondered about... There must be something that makes a woman react that way. Whether it is insecurity, or whether she didn't want to do the job. She had a profession, didn't she?

KENNEDY: Yes, she was a professional architect. I know you are doing this study of the wives. I was thinking about this before, and I've talked about this many times. I should really use the term “spouses” to be completely accurate, but most of the time we have been in the service, it is wives. I'm not sure whether they are a plus or a minus in the business.

Q: You mean, wives per say?

KENNEDY: Wives in the Foreign Service. There is a real problem.

Q: But, we exist.

KENNEDY: No, no. Without going into all the details, the women are put into a very difficult position, being there, and having to be subservient to their husband's career for a long

time. Some wives have been superb in their support. I can name a good number of cases where if you talk about so and so to people, they will respond, “Oh, yes, I know his wife.” The wife is far more important to a post than a husband, but also, going back to what I was saying before, so many wives, particularly when they have power, ambassadors' wives, particularly, can absorb so much of the energy of the embassy and meeting their demands of redecorating, getting the right servants, and all of this. All of which I feel is wasted effort.

Q: You feel it is wasted effort?

KENNEDY: A lot of this. It's nice to have the place looking nice and all this, but to redo this... You wonder, is this frustrated ambition? I feel sorry for people thrown in a situation. At the lower level, think of watching this, how many men that you know find the administrative problem of keeping the families happy and all that, overseas. They devote how much of the effort of a mission to the administrative tale, which is keeping the wife happy, the kids happy, making sure the house is all right?

Q: It's the administrative tail in the Foreign Service that iwagging the mission dog. It really is. That I have some doubts about.

KENNEDY: Absolutely. Well, I mean, the conflict there. Rather than, “Go to your office, and do your job. If the lights don't work, you worry about that. Get the lights fixed, and then get on with your job.” Of course, much of our business is entertaining, but entertaining, I have always felt that it could be done at restaurants or somewhere else. I don't know. I have a mixed feeling about it. It is not going to go away. I think things have changed a bit, and that you are having more and more people in for a shorter time. Again, it is more mixed, male and female officers are coming in, who aren't making a career of it, and aren't married, or the husband or wife is not following. They are entertaining elsewhere. I'm not sure that it makes that much difference, but it is not going to go away. It never went away, and we did not have the system the British used to have, where basically, you didn't get married until your late forties. Then, you married, usually a woman much younger who

was so overwrought by being put into this position, that she was docile, until she had been around long enough to create the same trouble our ambassadors' wives started to create. It is a mixed bag.

Q: In my interviews of the older women, I find no questions of their role. By and large, they were happy. It was an adventure. Now, whether this was the background they came from, they had a tendency to have come out of private schools. They were brought up in, perhaps, a sophisticated family. It isn't until you get to my generation that you get the rumblings, because of course, they paid their dues. Then, 1972 came along and cut everything out from under them. We were made independent individuals, but in a sense, what happened to us was that we were just cast adrift.

KENNEDY: Once you question it... Looking at it, from a practical point of view of the tremendous effort, not just effort, but the tangible administrative effort wasn't that great, but the efforts the husband had of keeping their family happy while they were trying to do their job and all this. As time went on, at least there was a time when you could expect the wife to be a good soldier. This is a bad term these days, but I think in many ways, there was more contentment on both sides. Do your own thing, this meant often sniping at their husbands and being unhappy.

Q: What do you think of the situation at our last post where I was working at the CLO, and the consul general's wife was in the Visa section? The administrative officer's wife was running the commissary. The political officer's wife was the nurse. The DCM's wife was on the switchboard. She alternated the switchboard with the communicator's board. There were times when we had 100 percent spouse employment and there was no one out in the community to do the volunteer work. I worked half a day. I had mornings in the office and afternoons out at teas and doing the traditional role. Did that breed happiness or are we...

KENNEDY: But, you know, you are really talking about something that I'm finding today, here in Washington, as you are, most of the husbands and wives are working. Everybody

is working now. Conditions of life have not improved, I don't think. There is very little entertaining. People don't get together. I know my wife comes home from teaching, and she is working with papers until 11:00 at night. She is exhausted. This is what she gathers from colleagues. This is very much the case.

Q: The quality of life.

KENNEDY: The quality of life has changed. It requires everybody to work. There was something about the homemaker taking care of the children was very important, but also making a pleasant place to come home to, where we both could enjoy. That's gone.

Q: How much of this is the mindset of the times? How much of it is actual financial need because of foreign service sellers? I have my opinions on that, too. I would like yours.

KENNEDY: The thing is, if I see the phenomenon is not at all restricted to the Foreign Service. It takes more money to raise a family and two incomes are needed.

Q: Yes, it does.

KENNEDY: So, whether it is the mindset, but the problem is that just to have a house, which was sort of the middle-class dream, just takes a lot of work.

Q: It was an achievable goal.

KENNEDY: It is a middle-class reality. It requires both people tbe working.

Q: You think it does now?

KENNEDY: Maybe not, but the cost of housing and all has gone up proportionateley, I think, much more than the other thing. The cost of college for kids, but not having as many kids. There are some things. Some of it is mindset, too. In other words, can you settle for less? Overall, I would say that the quality of life has gone down. It has gone down,

obviously, in the Foreign Service. It reflects families elsewhere, too. As far as the volunteer work, there is not as much time for it.

Q: There is a pattern that is beginning to develop as I interview the older women. The really older women, like Mrs. Arthur Bliss Lane, Mrs. Elbrick, Mrs. Spaild, they all live in and pal around Dupont Circle, in that area, because that was the social place to live when they were young and going into the Foreign Service. The next age group lives in Georgetown. There is quite a little colony of people in their early seventies in Georgetown, because at that time, they had been in the service long enough to buy houses over there, when houses over there were $18,000 and $20,000. The next group gets out to Bethesda and Chevy Chase. From then on, it's the suburbs.

KENNEDY: Yes, I'm sure it is the suburbs. I feel somewhat, I won't say bitter, but I expected at this stage that I would have a house in Chevy Chase, an ability to take fairly extensive vacations or trips to Europe, and my wife would not be working. That just isn't the case. This is true of most of my colleagues.

Q: Is this the Foreign Service? Is it that our salaries are not high enough, or is it just society in general? Everybody has the same housing problem. Well, no they don't have the same problem we do. We have friends who are leaving Alcoa at Alcoa's request. He is coming down to take a job here in Washington. Alcoa is just paving the way for them to buy a house here and relocate. The Foreign Service doesn't do that.

KENNEDY: No, it doesn't. For our 35th reunion, which I didn't go to... I graduated from Williams in 1950. They sent a questionnaire around asking what your salary was, among other things. In my class, they had something like $147,000. In the first place, the people who answered something like this are the people who have done well. I took a look at that thing and said, “My God!” At that time, I was getting about $70,000, which is the absolute top of the State Department pay grade. No stock options, or anything like this. I can't plead poor mouth, but I'm just not living the way I thought I would be living. I look to my parents

type generation, and I thought I would be leading a gentile life when I got out, and I ain't. But, I don't want to overemphasize this. It's happening to most Americans. You can look at some of the people. I don't know what happens when they leave Alcoa, whether they will have a good pension or not, but the great majority of people, husbands and wives are having to work. So, the State Department is only following the trend of most middle-class, upper middle-class. I'm using the financial, rather than the social sense.

Q: What are we going to do about, and can we do anything about our mobile lifestyle, which makes it virtually impossible for a woman to develop a career and really have the financial input into the family that her peer who stays here have? Are we going to lose good people that way? I have a young friend who is a career development officer for the junior officers. He says really the attrition rate is not all that bad, contrary to popular opinion. Once in, people have a tendency to stay in.

KENNEDY: It's hard to get jobs. There was a time when the world was your oyster, I think, during the 1960s and early to mid-1970s or something. There was a feeling that one could pop back and forth. But, now, because of economic conditions, it's harder and harder for college graduates to get a job. The economic imperatives are keeping people more onto the job. I think what you are going to see are more and more people keeping one eye open for opportunities elsewhere. I expect they are not going to find them. It's not very easy to move from the Foreign Service, into something else. There used to be a time when elite universities and the business were interested in getting, but this isn't the case anymore. There was something in the Foreign Service Journal just the other day. It was an editorial on this fact. A few people can parlay an ambassadorial type of assignment, but a normal Foreign Service officer, no matter how well they have done, I have found that nobody gives a damn about the Foreign Service. I haven't made strenuous efforts, but I from time to time would try to seek outside employment and found that nobody is really very interested. At least the people to whom I have talked.

Q: Is this because we have spent so much of our lives abroad, out othe mainstream here?

KENNEDY: We are government workers, and we haven't been involved in business. Unless you are going to be with something tied completely to the government where you are bringing expertise, they want people with proven business ability, whether it is in sales or financial management and all that. If you are in the universities, the universities' salaries aren't that high. Universities pay professors about the GS-13 level. So, the universities are not going after our people, because they have their own. People have used Fulbrights or have traveled. Their professors go abroad every summer and they probably get around and do as much as we can do. Business people shy away from hiring people from the government. We don't have the same training. We are not very employable, unless you come in for four or five years, and then drop out very quickly, and make your move somewhere else. But, back to your main question of what do you do about the Foreign Service families? I don't see any real solution except split tours, and more divorces. I didn't like being in Saigon for only 18 months, apart. That doesn't work very well.

Q: I imagine that you and your wife were a team, and worked as team for years and years and years.

KENNEDY: Oh, yes! That makes it much stronger. We were fortunate because we were both a team. When we got married, my wife was seven years younger, we had three children, bam, bam, bam. There was no question about her working and all this, but the bill came due some years later because my wife went on, got her degree, got her masters degree. She had not graduated from college when we got married, so she went to the University while I was in Vietnam, and raised three kids. Then, she started working on a teaching career, which was fortunate because you can carry it around. She taught in Greece and she taught in Korea. But, again, at a very, very low salary. Overseas schools don't pay much. Then, she came back here, got her Masters degree, and is now teaching in Fairfax County schools, but at a great cost, to try to put this together.

It has been working until now. There is sort of the new morality. I know in Korea, you had a good number of unmarried young officers who had live-in girlfriends. They would move

to a new place, and new girlfriend. In a way, there are security problems. But, at least it served to at least keep the troops pacified. I know there are some cases where female officers have the same arrangement. This meant they were unmarried but getting some of the delights of home. Basically, it's that little montage, but if we are going to get a little tougher on the moral side of things, it is no longer accepted that you can have a girlfriend in the house, or a boyfriend in the house. It's going to make it more difficult. I don't see how career people both can travel and serve abroad. You have to make sure you marry people who both are able to pass a very stiff, very selective exam. The odds are terrible on that unless you make sure you marry within that group for the survival of a marriage.

Q: Then, they go to the larger, more attractive posts, because that is where you would find a slot for both of them. Or they have to be separated, and one goes one way and one goes the other.

KENNEDY: I think it is going to split a lot. It's not a versatisfactory situation.

Q: I have a theory, too, on where we could save a lot of money. I think we are over housing people overseas, because we still have the representational housing mindset and people are not using their houses for that purpose.

KENNEDY: I think this is true because I found when I was in Italy, for example, my last post in Naples, the Italians weren't entertaining as much as these. People don't do it around here as much. I think you rely on office meetings to take care of most things, either that or a large reception, which is something else, anyway.

Q: But the power breakfast, that is what I love.

KENNEDY: I'm not into that particular circuit, but this is the type of thing that is happening. You can't get the help to entertain. It's a different ball game. Not a satisfactory one, but there it is.

Q: So, I think we just move with the times and see how our younpeople manage.

KENNEDY: Yes.

Q: Tell me more about Naples. You must have had a lot of peoplclamoring for visas there.

KENNEDY: Again, I have to say that I went from Korea, where there really was clamoring. There was a great deal of fraud, and a great deal of pressure. Then, I went to Naples. Naples has always been the great extrep#t for the United States. Everybody thinks of Naples. It was a big building, with two entrances. One was for regular people, and one was for Visa applicants. Now, of course, we now only have one entrance. I had a hard time adjusting because in Korea we were dealing with around 30,000 visas a year. I went to Naples, and we were down below 3,000 visas a year. Sometimes the Italian staff would say that they were overwhelmed. Thinking how the local Korean staff was handling things, I had a hard time not giggling. Immigration in Italy has gone way down. What immigration there is there is what they call “internal immigration,” going from Southern Italy up to Milano, or Torino, to the big factories up there. Many had gone, of course, up to Switzerland and to Germany and all that. Most of that was because economic ties had gotten tighter, and they lost their jobs so they were going home. Italians weren't immigrating. There was travel and some immigration, but it just wasn't anywhere near what it used to be. The big thing in Italy there was when they had a bad earthquake, in November 1980. The epicenter of the earthquake was about 30 or 40 miles from Naples. It killed about 80 people in Naples. Had it been 20 miles closer, we would have had around 100,000 deaths. It shook the hell out of our building. It held up well. We were on made ground and filled in a bay back in the 19th century. But, there we got involved in relief efforts. Also, we sent word back to the people in the United States about relatives, friends. Immigration to the United States was not as much from Naples as it was from the countryside. The Neopolitans are special persons. They have their own lifestyle, which

is quite different from the countryside. People who say they are from Naples, the Italian background is usually from villages outside the city area, in the rural countryside.

Q: What about the new immigration law? Is it the best possiblsolution?

KENNEDY: Well, it is a solution. There's been this new immigration law - Adjustment of status, in other words, people who are here illegally can change their status to legalization. The problem is that sets a precedent. I think every two years, they will probably be doing it again. The main thing it does do, in my mind, for the first time, it allows the government to crack down on people who make a point of hiring illegal immigrants. It is a beginning. It's not perfect, but given the political dynamics, I'm surprised it made it through. This is a law that was put into effect 10 days ago or something like that, after long, long years of debate.

Q: I would think that putting the onus on the employer would be thway to go.

KENNEDY: It is on the employer but all someone has to do is show a fake ID, and it's not up to the employer. It's not going to be perfect, but it's going to drive out some of the more apparent illegal people, which has not been the case until now.

Q: Were you always able to work well with INS, mostly, on the samtrack, as the consulate?

KENNEDY: Yes, normally I had no great problem with INS. They have a different attitude. There have been efforts to have INS take over the visa issuing function overseas. I think this would be a bad mistake. Other countries do it; Canada, Australia. But, they were set out to recruit people, really. Now, it's more, we need better liaison. We are not doing that. The other thing is, for the Foreign Service, I think it would be a disaster. It would be a major function taken away.

Q: I was going to say, further erosion, just like the commercial...

KENNEDY: But, much more so because this is a good place for young officers to wet their feet, to get them to deal in a foreign environment. Also, by having... I hate to use the term,

but what I consider more politically intelligent officers dealing with immigration problems. We saved an awful lot of problems within the foreign policy field, but if you set people up who are untrained, uneducated in much of the work, to deal with often very sensitive issues and turn them loose with no real control... The ambassador would have no control over them, and much would depend on the judgment at the lower level. The issues are sensitive, and you have to understand the culture. This is the problem of the supervising consular officers like myself, to bring young people who are dealing with these, things, to educate them and make them sensitive. I think you would be asking for an awful lot of trouble in asking another agency to do this. Their idea, basically, of saying no, and when in doubt, refuse, rather than look into things. We had all sorts of problems with other nations and with Congress, and everything else. As a general rule, I would say, from the point of view of the United States, it's far better to have Foreign Service officers to do the visa issuing. From the point of view of the Foreign Service, it would be a disaster to do this because you would be taking about one third of the positions, which has always been the training ground of the young Foreign Service officer, and a damn good training ground, too, and getting rid of it. Unfortunately, I think many of our senior officers think it would be delightful. I think they feel that it is dirty work and who wants to do it. They would really be cutting their nose off. I don't know. The visa issuing is always in jeopardy, and at some point, it could fall into the hands of the immigration services.

Q: Then, what would be left, because Commerce took, I think, 100 some jobs and about 15 officers went over. This is what my husband ran into when he was looking for his last assignment. There was this glut of economic officers.

KENNEDY: It would be a disaster. But, it's a disaster that coulhappen. The Foreign Service is not as good a career as it used to be.

Q: How much of that is due to communication and instant jet travel? I'm sure there must have been cases where it could have been very easily handled in Saigon, where someone flew out from Washington to be the instant solution. That must erode...

KENNEDY: There is no doubt about the ability of the man or the woman on the spot to settle things. There is too much communication back with Washington with people who don't really understand the situation on the ground.

Q: I think you have answered all my questions. I really think you have. I did have one question. If you thought that consular officers were treated equitably in promotion? How many consular officers become ambassadors, if that is the test of success?

KENNEDY: Well, I don't know if that is the test of success, but I must say, there has been such a change. It's light years difference between the way it was. When I came in, there was no identifiable consular officers (professionals) who had gone, except a few whose ties were political really, but I mean people who had worked their way up, who had gone beyond the grade of O-3 (now FS-1). None. So, when I came in, everybody said, “Stu, get the hell out of this.” People kept offering me other jobs, particularly when I was in Yugoslavia. Ambassador Elbrick and others were saying... I know, when Larry Eagleburger left the Economic Section, they offered me his job. When an officer from the Political Section left, they offered me his job. But, I was having so much fun running my own consular section... But I was told at the time that this was a bad career move. You were a regular officer. I took my exam and all that, and why do this? I couldn't see leaving a job where I was running a section, part of the country team, to be number three or four man in the Political or Economic section. But, then about 1965, 1966, you have the two Margarets. Two women consulars named Margaret who were promoted to FS-02. This is the first time this has happened.

Q: Oh, women were the first ones.

KENNEDY: Barbara Watson was on the scene, who was head of the consular thing. All of a sudden, consular business became... I don't want to say sexy, but there were pressures there to do something about it. I wrote an article in the Foreign Service Journal about that time, too. People keep referring back to this.

Q: When was that? In the 1970s?

KENNEDY: Yes, this was about 1972, 1973, talking about how consular work is its own reward, but also talking about how you weren't really getting promoted. But, things started to change. I was at the right place at the right time, because I moved up eventually. I retired as minister consular, which is the equivalent to the old FS-01. That was unthinkable, back in the late 1960s. Absolutely unthinkable, because people didn't talk about this. Really, the consular officers came out of the closet. My wife would laugh at times, but there was a certain unhappiness, too. Foreign Service wives would be sitting around talking and they would say to my wife, “What does your husband do?” “Oh, he is chief of the Consular Section.” The ambassador's wife would say, “Well, that is important work, too” as a sort of put-down. It was very, very difficult and things have changed. I think it was because of people like myself, quite frankly, and a number of others, who decided to stay in and the hell with this. But, not just to accept the way people felt about it, but to start saying, “Look what we are doing. Isn't this fun?” I have felt this way all along and still feel this way. I have had a good number of people who were then junior officers come back and say how much they liked what I had told them. It helped change their thinking. Some of them had gone onto other types of work, but at least they had new respect for consular work. But, there was a group of us, who kind of on our own, decided we were coming out of the closet, and we are not going to try to skip this work. We enjoy it because it is great work. It really is fun.

Q: I was going to ask you what you thought your greatescontribution to the service was? Maybe that was it.

KENNEDY: I think so. I think, in a small way, there is not that big a puddle, I had some effect, just in talking with my colleagues, and having done some writing on it. I was with the Board of Examiners, and I was insisting that we use the same standards for consular officers as for political officers when selecting them. I ran across a little opposition, but I

fought it. I think there was a minor effect. One never turns a bureaucracy around, but I think there was a cumulative effect with myself and others, all about the same generation.

Q: Interesting. Then, Studs Turkel wrote Working, and much to his surprise, and a lot of other peoples surprise, it's the work ethic, job satisfaction was really more important than income.

End of interview